

March 2022



# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

## Lent *Full to the Brim* { *With all that you are*

Lent is that season of the liturgical year leads us to the cross and the glory of Easter morning. The season begins with Ash Wednesday on March 2. Your worship committee has planned a brief Ash Wednesday worship service from 6:30-7 Wednesday in the Sanctuary. During the Lenten season we will be focusing on the parables and stories of God's abundant grace, drawing us to a closer walk of faith, around the theme of Full to the Brim.

Holy Week details will be in the April newsletter. Easter Worship is slated for 9 AM in the Sanctuary and 11:15 AM in the Chapel.

Pick up your Lenten devotional the next couple of weeks at the office or the welcome center.

The first Sunday of March is the first Sunday of Lent, plus Celebration of the Gifts of Women, with women leading worship, and installation and ordination of the deacons and elders who were recently elected. Congregational meeting follows. It is a cannot miss morning!

### Artists Needed

Mindy is spear-heading a group of people to help make the new cut-lace banners that will be on the chancel steps this Lenten season. If you are comfortable cutting with an Exacto-knife, your help is NEEDED March 3. Let Mindy or Judi know you are interested and we will find a time-slot that will work. Many hands make light work.

### Bach Concerts

presented by  
UI Choral Dept

### Wednesdays

March 9 and 30

April 6 and 20

12 noon - 12:30 PM

### Sanctuary

First Presbyterian Church  
Champaign, IL

Join us at noon each of  
these Wednesdays as we  
enjoy singers and  
instrumentalists from the  
U of I Choral Department  
present selections  
from Bach.

Concerts are free and  
open to the public.  
Masks required.

## Celebrating our 57<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary

BY GINNY WAALER  
VWAALER@ILLINOIS.EDU

January 30, 2022 was on Sunday, and **Mary Beastall**, (one of our bridesmaids!) had invited us to have brunch with her after church. So, we decided that we would go out for dinner on January 29, Saturday, for a nice dinner. We made reservations at the Big Grove in downtown Champaign. It was a nice evening and we headed down Windsor Road in the Toyota about 6:15, after watching a winning Illinois basketball game against Northwestern.

As we crossed Race Street, we saw some flashing lights ahead of us on the south side of the road. There was a tow truck, a police car and a car facing the wrong way. We slowed down and all of a sudden, we were hit by something big on the passenger door of our car! We pulled over and stopped to see what happened. All we could see was a huge dent in the door and the right front fender above the tire was crushed. What hit us?

We walked over to the other side of the road to see what was happening there. The tow truck driver and police officer told us that a car had been hit by a deer crossing Windsor Road, and the car behind it could not stop in time and hit it. I told them what happened to our car, and they came and looked at it. They determined that we had been struck by a deer also!

Well, we decided to cancel our dinner date downtown, and take the car home. It was really damaged, and not happy to move.

It was still the night before our anniversary, so Jack thought, considering all that had just happened, we should go to the Steak and Shake! It would be appropriate! So we took my car. However, when we got there, they had no indoor seating and the pick up line was long. We considered some other options, and decided to go to Crane Alley, a nice little bar/restaurant in downtown Urbana. It was not too crowded, and they seated us at a nice table across from a young couple. We ordered a Reuben sandwich and sweet potato fries to share with a glass of wine and a beer. It was very good and just what we wanted.

As we were recounting our evening, Jack thought it would be fun to have a photo of us celebrating this unusual anniversary. So we asked the man at the other table if he would take the photo. We told them about our earlier experience.

When it came time to leave, the other couple were also leaving. The waiter came to our table at the same time, and we said we were ready to leave and needed our bill. He said that the man who took our photo had already paid for our dinner! We looked at him and his girlfriend with surprise. They wished us a happy anniversary!

What an evening. We know that God was with us all the time, to keep us safe when the deer hit our car and then to sit next to such a thoughtful couple. We continue to love each other and are blessed to have so many wonderful memories now and over the past 57 years together.

## People are singing and bells are ringing!

*That's right, after a taking another Covid "break," the Chancel Choir and Bell Choir are meeting again! Now is the time to join us as we are learning music for Lent, Easter and Spring Music Sunday. This year's Music Sunday will be held on Sunday, May 1, and will feature a Missa Brevis by Haydn.*

*Both groups meet on Wednesday evening with Bells at 6 and Choir at 7. We'd love to have you join us!*

# Church Officers

2024

2023

2022

**Session Elders** Moderator: Matt Matthews

Mary Jane Kelley

Mary Gritten

Ken Chapman

Mary Nicholas

Carol Miles

Celeste Kim

Ann Webbink

Steve Tock

John Muirhead

Jan Wittler

Tom Ulen

Ann Stout

**Community Mission Deacons** Moderator:

Jane Alsberg

Kathy Schoeffmann

Itch Jones

Grace Ashenfelter

Bruce Rainey

Lola Ruthmansdorfer

Leslie Thomas

**Congregational Care Deacons** Moderators: Amy Born & Pam Knox

Amy Born

Jean Brunson

Sue Fischer

Nancy MacGregor

Pam Knox

Mary Jane Kelley

Bill &amp; Sherry Marble

Marge Olson

Buddy Selin

Eric &amp; Cathy Stickels

Tom &amp; Julia Ulen

JOIN US FOR A  
**FELLOWSHIP  
 DINNER**

**Two new small groups are starting. One is for lunch, the other for dinner.**

**Wednesday, March 2, 11:30 AM Centennial Hall. Catered by Michael's Catering at a cost of \$12.**

**Wednesday, March 9, 5 PM Biaggi's.**

**RSVP to the church office. Each participant covers their own cost.**

# Children, Youth & Family

## Children, Youth, Family

BY MINDY WATTS-ELLIS, DIRECTOR  
MINDY@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

### Youth Triennium Canceled

Unfortunately the PCUSA Youth Triennium has been canceled for this summer due to concerns around preventing the spread of the coronavirus with such a large gathering of youth from all over the nation in one location. However, I will be speaking with our youth who were interested in attending for a suitable alternative experience this summer. The possibility of attending a youth conference at Montreat or a mission trip to Memphis are possibilities.

### Family Fellowship and Service

Our next event for family fellowship will be March 27. We will meet at the church to assemble hygiene kits that can be used for natural disasters. If the weather allows we will meet outdoors, if not then we will be in Centennial Hall. The time will be announced later this month.

## Sunday School Update

BY SAMANTHA NICHOLS, SUNDAY SCHOOL COORDINATOR  
SAMANTHA@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

### Sunday School Update

In-person Sunday School is back! Thanks be to God for a decline in Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations. May we also pray for those who are sick with Covid-19, who have lost someone to Covid-19, and who care for people sick with Covid-19.

We are currently offering three classes: preschool, elementary school, and a combined middle and high school class.

Like last semester, we have several safety precautions in place:

- Students and volunteers are required to wear masks.
- Windows are open and air purifiers are in use whenever possible.
- All teachers and classroom helpers are vaccinated.
- Snacks are distributed at the end of class so students can take them home to eat.

If you are not quite ready to attend in-person classes, please check [firstpres.church/kids](https://firstpres.church/kids) (password: Firstpreskids) for lesson plans that have been adapted for use at home. These lesson plans are regularly updated, so be sure to check the website each week! We'd love your feedback on these at-home lesson plans.

All three classes will be exploring some interesting and meaningful topics:

- Preschool students will be learning about Jesus' friendship and sharing.
- Elementary school students will

continue their study of Jesus' sermon on the mount before beginning a new unit on how Jesus describes himself to us.

- Middle and high school students will reflect on the book of Revelation before beginning a new unit on human sexuality and faith. Parents will receive a letter with more information about the sexuality unit before it begins.

I look forward to learning with our wonderful students and volunteers. In-person classes are made possible by a fantastic group of volunteer teachers and classroom helpers. We are always looking for more volunteers to ensure the sustainability of our program.

Please let me ([Samantha@Firstpres.church](mailto:Samantha@Firstpres.church)) know if you have any questions about serving or are interested in getting involved.

**The Annual Meeting  
of the Congregation  
will be held  
Sunday, March 6,  
immediately following the  
9 AM service.**



# The Heart of Mission

## The Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Fund Is At Work

BY STEVE GRITTEN

STEVE.GRITTEN@SBCGLOBAL.NET

Through the efforts of our congregation and others like us throughout the United States, the Presbyterian Disaster Fund(PDA) for the first six months of 2021 provided 84 grants within the United States and 13 more for other countries totaling \$1,978,797.

In addition to these funds, advocacy and recruitment of volunteers have been used when needed. As usual, this fund has helped communities that have suffered from tornadoes, floods, fires, toxic waste discharges and other such disasters.

Early in 2021, PDA launched a new grant opportunity for refugee and immigrant advocacy with the formation of the International Response Refugee Ministry. Additionally, COVID 19 has also created situations that have required PDA's support

Thank you for your ongoing support of this vital ministry of our church locally and worldwide (For additional information...2021 PDA mid year report final (pcusa.org)

## A Tremendous Amount of Work Remains To Be Done

BY JIM BERGER

JIM@JEBERGER.NET

Imagine getting hit by a magnitude 7.2 earthquake, only to be hit by a tropical storm three days later!

You do not even have to imagine that; that is exactly what happened last August to our neighbors in Haiti. Survivors could not return to houses that were still collapsing, not even to escape the rain.

Add to that, political unrest and gang activity. As **Rev. Edwin González-Castillo** points out, "Our partners have been in contact with the police so they can provide escorts to the trucks as they deliver the food and the materials safely." Our aid-workers are committed to healing, whatever it takes.

See <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/presbyterian-disaster-assistance-partners-meeting-basic-needs-in-haiti/>

For another view of what Haiti has faced and how they have been facing it, I refer you to <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/after-a-massive-earthquake-and-a-tropical-storm-haiti-continues-to-face-serious-challenges/>

Cindy Corell, a mission co-worker who has lived in Haiti since 2013, speaks to the challenges and the disappointments, but she also assures us, "It is so powerful the way the people of Haiti reach out to help each other," said Corell. "They will put themselves in harm's way. They

will scrounge in the rubble to pull somebody out they don't know. They will just show up. After all they've been through, time after time after time, they will go out and help their neighbor. They have so much to teach us. It's just so heartening. There are so many humanitarian challenges in Haiti but the human resources of Haiti, especially its young people, are so strong and so good."

Six months later, a tremendous amount of work remains to be done.

Despite the work, we are grateful to welcome Ruling Elder, Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri, and her husband, the Rev. José Manuel Capella-Pratts as our new regional liaisons for the Caribbean (see <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/a-new-call-to-connect-different-parts-of-the-body-of-christ/> ).

I sincerely look forward to that day that we will meet them, which we are planning. In the meantime, as we rebuild our own numbers and draw younger people into our faith, let us not forget to mention the importance of mission in everything that we do! Let's create purpose and meaning that wins hearts and minds to God's best plans for each one of us!

Part of that will be right in Haiti.



## English as Second Language News

BY VAL SMITH, DIRECTOR  
VAL@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

The 'in-person' concert and church services at the church on February 20 were another taste of what we are looking forward to when some of our classes are 'in-person' again. Several ESL students attended with their families and were greeted by the ESL team. It was interesting to hear about each person's connection to the program and witness their joy in seeing their tutors.



In keeping with our goal to meet the language needs of permanent residents in Champaign and Urbana, we have a late afternoon and evening class session once a week. In addition, one of our volunteers, Bonnie Ward and her granddaughter, have been tutoring an Afghan family of nine in their home. All of these students have the extra challenge of learning English while working

full time and raising families in a new country.

Thank you again for your prayers and support for the volunteer team and students. Please know that you are sharing in spreading God's love to others in a very practical way.

## Environmental Stewardship

BY PAT PHILLIPS  
P.PHILLIPS42@SBCGLOBAL.NET



**Help Wanted!**  
**Adopt a Highway**  
**Look for a chance to**  
**Sign Up to Clean Up**

April 9 will be the date for a Spring walk on the church's neighboring streets and park, gathering litter in good company, with good purpose. We hope you'll sign up the last 2 Sundays in March and April 3. Or contact **Liz Miley** at [ebmiley@aol.com](mailto:ebmiley@aol.com)

A second filtered water bottle filler has been installed in the hall northwest

of Westminster Hall, helping to clear landfills of plastic!

Including your recycling contributions of Styrofoam, taped batteries, medicine bottles and eyeglasses, which have been generous, and the LED lights which have been installed, our church helps each of us to be a steward of God's earth.

Check out the Faith in Place website and watch for Green Team activities for opportunities.

We have been re-certified by the PCUSA as an Earth Care congregation, an annual review.

Faith in Place is presenting an Earth Month vigil from 6 to 7 on March 31, a zoom event. RSVP at <https://www.faithinplace.org/coming-events>

## The Republic of Cuba

America's Playground  
1902-1934

BY BOB KIRBY, CUBA PARTNERS  
RWK3213@GMAIL.COM

America's Playground  
1902-1934

The 1900's saw Cuba divided by race, economic disparities and political ideology. A series of failed governments made fertile ground for US hegemony. Sugar mills were merged with American businesses such as Hershey, Coca-Cola and Hires (root beer). Americans owned almost 50% of sugar mills. American residential neighborhoods were developed next to these. Tourism to Cuba tripled between 1914 and 1928 as Cuba was promoted as a tropical paradise where one could indulge in gambling, the lottery, drinking and romancing. Horse

racing, boxing, prostitution, and baseball became prominent features of Cuba's landscape. Organized crime flourished. Cubans became increasingly dependent. Historian Louis A. Pérez Jr said, "The sugar company was emblematic of almost everything that was wrong in Cuba's relationship with the United States: the powerlessness, the degree the mill constituted a world into which the Cubans had no rights except for those conceded by the company and to which existed neither remedy or redress."

The 1930's brought the great depression and Cuba's standard of living fell to one-fifth what it had been in 1925. Cubans became increasingly resentful of US control. The United States became uncomfortable with a growing leftist political movement among unions, students and intellectuals and increasing power of the Cuban military. It was time for a change. The stage was set for still another new government friendly to US interests.

Next month: Fulgencio Batista

**In an effort to get the monthly newsletter out at the beginning of each month, the deadline needs to be pushed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the preceeding month.**

**The deadline for the April 2022 issue is Monday, March 21.**

## New Mission Coworkers for Cuba

" ....I am excited about the possibility of connecting different parts of the body of Christ with each other and engage in mission together....."

These are the words of the **Rev. José Manuel Capella-Pratts** who with wife of 25 years, ruling elder the **Rev Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri**, have begun their work as PC-USA regional liaisons for the Caribbean. They will be responsible for mission in Cuba, Haiti and The Dominican Republic.



José brings a bachelor's degree in psychology and a Master of Divinity degree. He served as a pastor in Puerto Rico and most recently in Miami. Vilmarie holds a B.A. in education (English as a second language-ESL) and an M.Ed. in curriculum and teaching. She taught high school English and has continued teaching ESL. She served as co-moderator of the General Assembly in 2018. "When we learn, we open our

minds," Cintrón-Olivieri said. "I'm very excited to begin this new adventure, this new chapter in a place that is home, the Caribbean."

Both are natives of Puerto Rico and members of The Presbytery of Tropical Florida.

## Associate Pastor Nominating Committee

Betty Hollister  
Kevin Kim  
Nancy Martin  
Carol Penka  
Bruce Rainey  
Kathy Schoeffmann

Relationships are built through circles vs rows. Even though what we learn by sitting in the pew on Sunday mornings, small groups provide the path to strong, caring relationships.

We are here to help,  
Small Group Support Team





As we approach Lent,  
may we all "delight in the law of the Lord"

Psalm 1:3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not  
wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Psalm 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, He  
leads me beside quiet waters.

Isaiah 43:2 When you pass through, I will be with you; and  
when you pass through the rivers, I will be with you...

Isaiah 58:11 The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy  
your needs in a sun-scorched land and He will strengthen  
your frame. You will be like a well watered garden, like a  
spring whose waters never fail.

John 4:10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God  
and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked  
Him and He would have given you living water."

## *Jays & Concerns*

*We extend our sympathy to...*

- **Cindy Shepherd** and her sister Elizabeth on the death of their mother, **Lou Shepherd**, who died Tuesday, February 1. Lou was a member of our church.
- **Rachel and Matt Matthews** on the death of Rachel's cousin, **Consuelo Hester**, on February 15 in New Mexico.

A special thanks to everyone who called, texted, sent emails, prayers, sympathy cards and food in response to the loss of our dear daughter, Mary Austin, who left us and transitioned to the life eternal with our Lord and Savior on January 8.

We felt your prayers and well wishes and words can not express our gratitude for your love and caring.

Sherry & Bill Marble

**If you or a loved one is in the hospital or in need of a pastoral visit, please let the church office know.**

**Our pastor, staff, and hospital visitors keep this information confidential.**

**Your church wants to be in touch.**

**Bless be the tie that binds.**



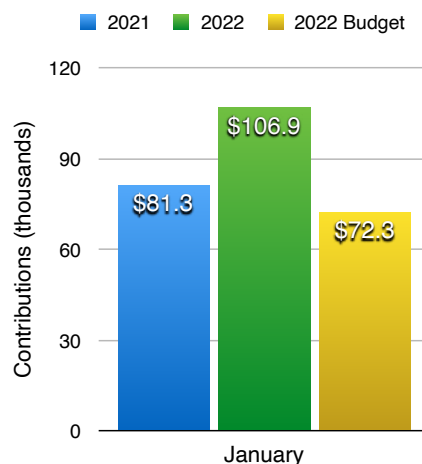
# Finance

## Financial Update

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN  
MSCHOEFFMANN@MCHSI.COM

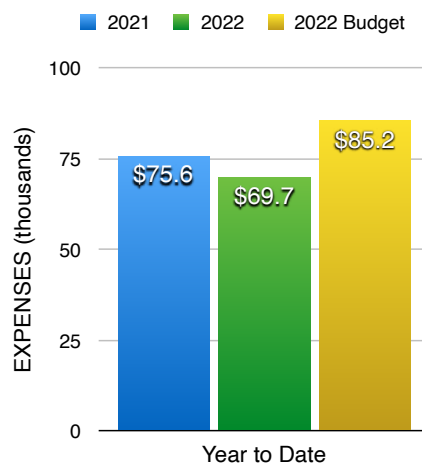
### Contributions

Contributions in January to the Operating Fund were \$25.6K more than in 2021 and \$34.6K more than the budget at \$106.9K. These figures include prepaid pledges (those paid in the year prior to the budget year) that are prorated over the year with 1/12 added to each month's contributions. Including all revenue sources, at 8.3% through the year we have received 22.5% of the expected year's revenue.



### Expenses

Year to Date expenses are \$15.5K below the budget at \$69.7K and less than in 2021 by \$5.9K. At 8.3% through the year we have experienced 6.8% of the expected year's expenses.



### Balance

Considering all sources, revenue exceeds expenses by \$151.3K for the year which is \$34.5K more than at the end of January in 2021. This is primarily due to a larger amount of prepaid pledges for 2022.

### Restricted Funds

In addition to contributions to the operating fund there was \$4,858 donated last month to special offerings and funds restricted to specific purposes such as missions supported by our church.

### Bob and Mary Twardock Music Fund

A gift from the Twardock family of \$25,000 has been received to establish an endowment to support music programs. The income from this fund can be used for music materials, instruments, soloists, special programming, youth music, etc. We give thanks to **David and Kathy Twardock** for their gift to memorialize Bob and Mary's love of music.

**Would you like to be more active in PW?**

Would you like to serve with the Presbyterian Women Ministry? They are planning now for next year (July 2022-June 2023).

There are many roles available, some are short duration, seasonal or occasional and others have activities spread throughout the year.

Interested in more information or have questions? Contact the search committee about ways to get more involved with the PW Ministry.

Marge Olson (marjorieolson58@comcast.net) or Rittchell Yau (ryconnectsend@gmail.com)

Help support our **Free Little Pantry**. Supplies are very low and much appreciated during these cold winter months. Suggested items are small cereal boxes, self opening cans, protein bars, granola bars, small Kleenex packs, nuts and dried fruits. Items can be dropped off in the church office or Westminster Hall.

February 8, 2022



Dear Pastor Matthews and the First Presbyterian Church Community,

I was deeply touched and humbled by your letter. The recent rise in antisemitic attacks against Jews in the US, and the world, has caused myself and many Jews great pain and concern, even if it did not come as a surprise.

In your letter you thanked me for my work in God's world, but it is I that wishes to thank you for all your work in His world. In a time of darkness, even a small, flickering light has the power to shine the whole world. My grandfather, of blessed memory, who survived the horrors of the Holocaust and watched his family perish before his eyes, would not have been surprised by the uptick in attacks against Jews; but he would have been surprised, and touched, by your beautiful letter.

May we all merit to see and live in a world in which all nations, peoples and religions recognize the common humanity between all of us. A world filled with peace, tolerance, respect and love for all; and a day in which hateful attacks, such as the ones we have witnessed, will only be memories of a distant and dark past.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Nimrod P Soll

Co-Director, OU Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus - University of Illinois



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN

302 West Church Street  
Champaign, IL 61820

Change Service Requested



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
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**P:** 217.356.7238

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**E:** [info@firstpres.church](mailto:info@firstpres.church)

[www.firstpres.church](http://www.firstpres.church)

**Sunday:**

9 AM Worship/Sanctuary

10:15 AM Sunday School

11:15 AM The Gathering/Chapel

Online Worship is also available at 9 AM on Sunday mornings thru YouTube, Facebook, and our church website. Go to FirstPres.Live.

Contact the church office for more information.

**Pastor:**

Matt Matthews..... Senior Pastor/Head of Staff, Ext 213

**Staff:**

George Almasi ..... Facility Assistant  
Brendan Barker..... Organist  
Ritchie Drennen ..... Facility Manager, Ext. 237  
Patty Farthing..... Receptionist, Ext. 211  
Robert Ferrer ..... Audio-visual Technician  
Marcia Franks ..... Administrative Assistant, Ext. 210  
Judi Geistlinger..... Commissioned Lay Pastor  
Jason Gordon..... Technology Support  
Joe Grant..... Director of Music  
Sam Haupt ..... Director Contemporary Worship Band  
Rachel Matthews Mission Coordinator/Parish Associate, Ext. 219  
Samantha Nichols..... Sunday School Coordinator, Ext. 216  
Blaise Pascal..... CYF Connections Assistant, Ext. 216  
Ann Petry..... Accounting, Ext. 224  
Val Smith ..... ESL Director, Ext. 235  
Libby Sternhagen..... Bell Choir Director  
Mindy Watts-Ellis..... Director Children, Youth & Family, Ext. 212

Most of the staff email addresses are the person's first name followed by [@firstpres.church](mailto:@firstpres.church). For example, [matt@firstpres.church](mailto:matt@firstpres.church).

**The newsletter is published monthly.**

**Deadline is the third Monday of the month for the following month's edition.**

**Send submissions to [marcia@firstpres.church](mailto:marcia@firstpres.church).**